Open in app ↗

Medium Search Write

Welcome Offer Access to everything. Now 30% off. Upgrade now

Educations

N.A./A.A. Group Topic: The Doors of Perception… and the Doors We Close

Marcel Ray Duriez 14 min read · Jul 8, 2026

One of the most recognizable rock bands in history, The Doors, took its name from the book The Doors of Perception by Aldous Huxley. Huxley, in turn, borrowed the phrase from the poet William Blake, who wrote, “If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is — infinite.”

According to Ray Manzarek, he and Jim Morrison discussed Huxley’s book while spending time together on Venice Beach in the mid-1960s, and the band’s name grew from those conversations. The idea was that music could open the mind and challenge ordinary ways of thinking.

For many people, that sounds exciting. But recovery teaches us an important question:

What happens when we try to force open the mind with drugs?

At first, substances may seem to create insight, freedom, confidence, or spiritual experiences. Eventually, however, addiction often closes more doors than it opens. It closes the door to family. It closes the door to honesty. It closes the door to health, responsibility, and hope. The search for expanded perception can become a prison.

Jim Morrison often wrote about freedom, darkness, life, and death in songs such as The End and Light My Fire. His lyrics challenged listeners to think deeply, but his own struggles with alcohol became increasingly destructive. Morrison died at the age of 27, leaving behind extraordinary art — and a reminder that talent alone cannot protect someone from addiction.

Many people described Morrison as capable of kindness and compassion, yet addiction often overwhelmed those qualities. This is one of recovery's hardest truths: addiction does not erase the good in a person, but it can bury it beneath unhealthy choices.

In N.A. and A.A., we learn that real perception doesn't come from escaping reality — it comes from facing it honestly. A clear mind may not always feel exciting, but it allows us to build trust, relationships, purpose, and peace.

Today, we can choose a different door.

Not the door opened by chemicals.

The door opened by honesty.

The door opened by service.

The door opened by accountability.

The door opened by recovery.

Discussion Questions

1. What “doors” did addiction promise to open in your life?
2. Which important doors did addiction eventually close?
3. Have you ever confused escape with freedom?
4. What does having a clear mind allow you to experience today?
5. Which door do you want to walk through in your recovery this week?
6. What song, book, or piece of art has taught you something about life without encouraging self-destruction?
7. How can creativity be healthy without relying on drugs or alcohol?
8. What qualities in yourself have returned since becoming sober?
9. What does “freedom” mean to you today?
10. If your life were a hallway of doors, which one are you choosing to open now?

Closing Thought

Recovery is not about closing the mind — it is about opening it without destroying ourselves. The greatest perception is not found in intoxication, but in learning to see ourselves, others, and life clearly. Every day we stay clean or sober, we choose a door that leads not to illusion, but to a future.

The Mind Fixing Itself

One of the most remarkable abilities of the human brain is that it is never completely finished. For much of history, scientists believed that once the brain was damaged or developed unhealthy habits, there was little hope for change. Today we know something very different. The brain is constantly adapting, reorganizing, and creating new pathways. This ability, known as neuroplasticity, offers hope to anyone in recovery.

Addiction changes the brain. Drugs and alcohol artificially flood the brain with chemicals such as dopamine, teaching it to seek immediate pleasure while weakening judgment, impulse control, and emotional regulation. Over time, the brain begins to believe that the substance is necessary for survival. What once was a choice becomes a compulsion.

The encouraging news is that healing can begin the moment a person stops feeding the addiction.

Recovery is not simply about quitting a substance. It is about giving the brain an opportunity to repair itself. As weeks become months and months become years, many people notice improvements in memory, concentration, emotional stability, sleep, motivation, and relationships. The healing is often gradual, but it is real.

The mind also repairs itself through healthy experiences. Honest conversations, exercise, proper nutrition, quality sleep, meaningful work, creativity, meditation, counseling, and the fellowship found in N.A. and A.A. all strengthen healthier neural pathways. Every healthy decision is like laying another brick in the foundation of a stronger mind.

Healing does not mean forgetting the past. The memories remain, but the brain learns to respond differently to them. A craving that once felt impossible to resist becomes manageable. Anger that once exploded becomes something that can be understood and redirected. Fear becomes courage practiced one day at a time.

Recovery also teaches patience. We often expect the mind to heal overnight after years of damage. Just as a broken bone requires time to mend, the brain requires consistency, healthy habits, and support. Every sober day is another opportunity for the mind to continue rebuilding itself.

Perhaps the greatest lesson is this: the brain is always learning. If addiction taught it destructive habits, recovery can teach it healthier ones. Every meeting attended, every honest conversation, every act of service, every refusal to use, and every moment of hope becomes another lesson the brain remembers.

The mind is not your enemy. It is a living, changing part of you that is trying to adapt to the life you give it. When we feed it truth instead of lies, hope instead of despair, and recovery instead of addiction, it begins to heal.

The mind fixing itself is not a miracle in the supernatural sense. It is the miracle of human resilience. It reminds us that no matter how lost we have

been, healing remains possible. Recovery is proof that while addiction rewires the brain, hope can rewire it again.

NA-Style Group Topic: When We Try to Drown Our Sorrows — Learning from Janis Joplin

Group Theme

“You can’t drown emotional pain. It only learns to swim.”

Recovery often begins when we realize that alcohol and drugs don’t erase pain — they postpone it while creating new pain. Many people have tried to numb loneliness, trauma, grief, anxiety, or depression through substances. History gives us painful reminders of where that path can lead.

Essay

Janis Joplin became one of the most recognizable voices in rock music during the late 1960s. Her powerful performances inspired millions, but behind the fame she struggled with loneliness, insecurity, and substance use. She died in 1970 at the age of 27 from an accidental heroin overdose, with heavy alcohol use also being part of her life. Her death became one of the tragedies associated with the so-called “27 Club.”

Many people believe alcohol is a way to escape emotional suffering. It may seem to quiet painful memories or uncomfortable emotions for a short time, but the feelings almost always return stronger. What begins as relief can become dependence, isolation, damaged relationships, health problems, and sometimes death.

Recovery teaches a different lesson. Instead of drowning our sorrows, we learn to face them with honesty, support, accountability, and hope. Meetings, sponsors, therapy, healthy friendships, and the Twelve Steps provide tools that substances never could.

Today, thousands of people in recovery have lived well beyond age 27. They are parents, grandparents, workers, artists, and friends because they made one difficult decision: to ask for help and keep coming back. Their lives show that healing is possible, no matter how dark the past has been.

The goal of recovery is not simply to stay alive. It is to build a life where we no longer need to escape from ourselves. Every sober day is proof that pain can be survived without picking up a drink or a drug.

Three Lessons

1. **Pain ignored becomes pain multiplied.** Numbing emotions delays healing rather than creating it.
2. **Connection is stronger than addiction.** Recovery grows through honesty, fellowship, and asking for help.
3. **Your story is still being written.** Surviving today gives you the chance to help someone else tomorrow.

Discussion Questions

1. What emotions was I trying to escape through alcohol or drugs?
2. Did substances ever truly solve my problems, or only postpone them?
3. What healthy ways can I cope with emotional pain today?
4. Who can I reach out to before I relapse?
5. What does asking for help mean to me now?
6. How has recovery changed the way I deal with grief or loneliness?
7. What does “living instead of merely surviving” look like in my life?
8. Which lesson from Janis Joplin’s life speaks to me the most?
9. How can my recovery become an example of hope for someone else?
10. What is one action I can take today that moves me toward healing rather than escape?

Closing Reflection

“Recovery doesn’t erase yesterday, but it gives us the strength to face today and the hope to build tomorrow. We don’t honor those who were lost to addiction by following them into the darkness — we honor them by choosing to live.”

Group Topic: Self-Neglect – When Giving Too Much Means Losing Yourself

Introduction

Tonight's group focuses on self-neglect—the quiet habit of giving so much of ourselves to other people that we slowly stop caring for our own needs. Many people in recovery know what it feels like to put others first, whether through people-pleasing, unhealthy relationships, guilt, addiction, or trying

to rescue everyone around them. Eventually, our own physical, emotional, and spiritual health begins to suffer.

The life of reminds us how complicated this can be. He was often described as someone with a generous heart who cared deeply about others. At the same time, he struggled for years with substance use, repeated relapses, and serious health consequences. His story reminds us that compassion for others must be matched with compassion for ourselves. Recovery teaches us that caring for ourselves is not selfish—it is necessary.

Discussion

Self-neglect doesn't always look dramatic. Sometimes it looks like saying "yes" when we need to say "no." It looks like ignoring medical appointments, skipping meals, losing sleep, isolating ourselves, or believing that everyone else's needs matter more than our own. In addiction, self-neglect often becomes even stronger because substances temporarily numb pain while our lives slowly fall apart.

Recovery asks us to reverse that pattern. We begin learning healthy boundaries, asking for help, resting without guilt, taking medications as prescribed, eating healthier, attending meetings, and recognizing that we deserve the same kindness we offer other people.

When we constantly pour from an empty cup, eventually nothing is left. The strongest people are not those who sacrifice themselves completely; they are those who learn how to refill themselves so they can continue living meaningful lives.

Discussion Questions

1. What does self-neglect look like in your own life?
2. Have you ever felt guilty for taking care of yourself?
3. What boundaries are difficult for you to set?
4. How has addiction encouraged self-neglect?
5. What are three ways you can practice self-care this week?
6. Who reminds you that your well-being matters?
7. What warning signs tell you you're giving too much?
8. What does a healthy balance between helping others and helping yourself look like?
9. How can recovery help rebuild self-respect?
10. What is one promise you can make to yourself tonight?

Moral Reflection

Recovery is not only about putting down alcohol or drugs. It is also about picking yourself back up. You cannot give your best to your family, friends, or community if you continually ignore your own health and well-being. Loving others becomes healthier when it begins with respecting yourself.

Closing Thought

Self-care is not selfish. It is an act of recovery. Every healthy meal, every meeting attended, every doctor's appointment kept, every honest conversation, and every boundary set is another reminder that your life has value. You deserve the same care, patience, and love that you so freely give to everyone else.

You Are Worth It

There comes a point in recovery when the hardest person to believe in is yourself. The addiction may be gone, the substance may no longer be in your hands, but the voice inside your mind still whispers that you are not enough, that you have made too many mistakes, or that the world would somehow be better without you. Recovery asks us to challenge that voice every single day.

The truth is that you are worth it. Not because of the money you have, the job you hold, the mistakes you've overcome, or the opinions of other people. You are worth it simply because you are alive. Your life has value that cannot be measured by success or failure. Every person carries experiences, wisdom, kindness, and compassion that no one else can offer in exactly the same way. Your story matters because there is only one person who can tell it—you.

There are days when life feels heavy. Grief settles in, anxiety grows louder, depression clouds our thinking, and addiction convinces us that giving up would be easier than continuing. Yet feelings are not permanent. They rise, they fall, and they change. Recovery teaches us to make decisions based on hope instead of temporary emotions. What feels unbearable today may become the very experience that allows you to help someone else tomorrow.

You are worth sticking around for the people you have not yet met. Somewhere there is another person who will need to hear your story, your honesty, or your encouragement. You may never know how much your presence changes another person's life. Sometimes a smile, a conversation, or simply showing up is enough to remind someone else that they are not alone. We often underestimate the quiet impact we have on the people around us.

Your life has purpose, even if you cannot see it today. Purpose is not always found in extraordinary accomplishments. Sometimes purpose is choosing

recovery one day at a time. Sometimes it is being a better parent, a better friend, a better neighbor, or simply becoming a healthier version of yourself than you were yesterday. Purpose grows through small choices repeated consistently over time.

Recovery also teaches us that healing is not perfection. It is progress. There will be setbacks, disappointments, moments of doubt, and days when you question whether you are moving forward at all. Keep going anyway. Every step forward, no matter how small, is proof that you are choosing life over surrender. That decision deserves respect.

The world does not need a perfect version of you. It needs the authentic one. The person who has struggled, learned, fallen, gotten back up, and continued walking despite the weight they carried. Those experiences become the foundation for wisdom, empathy, and strength that cannot be learned from comfort alone.

If no one has told you recently, hear these words today: You matter. You are enough. You are worth fighting for. You are worth loving. You are worth forgiving. You are worth another chance. Recovery is not about proving your value—it is about discovering the value that has always been there.

Keep showing up. Keep asking for help when you need it. Keep believing that tomorrow can be different from today. Your life is meaningful, your presence is important, and your future is still being written. As long as you are here, there is hope. And as long as there is hope, there is another opportunity to grow, to heal, and to become the person you were always capable of being.

Stay. Heal. Live. The world is better because you are in it.

One Day at a Time: Resilience After Tragedy – Lessons from Joe Walsh's Recovery

Recovery is not a destination that someone reaches overnight. It is a journey made of thousands of decisions, each one built upon the choice to remain sober, honest, and hopeful for one more day. For many people, addiction develops as a way of escaping emotional pain, grief, trauma, loneliness, or regret. Unfortunately, while substances may temporarily numb these emotions, they eventually create even greater suffering. Recovery asks a person to face life without running from it and to discover that strength is often found in the moments when we choose not to give up.

Joe Walsh's life illustrates this truth. Throughout his career he achieved tremendous musical success, yet he also struggled with addiction and experienced heartbreaking personal tragedies. Instead of allowing those experiences to completely define his future, he eventually chose recovery. His story reminds us that even successful people are not immune to pain, addiction, or emotional suffering. Fame cannot replace peace of mind, and money cannot heal emotional wounds. True healing begins when someone admits they need help and becomes willing to accept it.

One of the greatest lessons in recovery is the phrase, "One day at a time." At first this may sound simple, but it contains tremendous wisdom. Thinking about staying sober forever can feel overwhelming. Thinking about getting through today is possible. Every morning becomes a new opportunity to make healthier choices. Every evening becomes evidence that another day has been successfully completed. Recovery is not won by giant leaps. It is won by consistent daily decisions.

Many individuals in recovery spend years thinking about the past. They wonder what their lives might have looked like had they made different choices. They replay conversations, missed opportunities, broken relationships, legal problems, financial losses, and painful memories. While reflection can be healthy, becoming trapped in regret often prevents healing. Recovery teaches that we cannot rewrite yesterday, but we can absolutely write a better tomorrow.

Resilience means continuing to move forward despite emotional pain. It is not pretending that suffering never happened. Instead, resilience acknowledges grief while refusing to let grief become our identity. People who develop resilience learn that setbacks do not erase progress. Relapses, failures, disappointments, and mistakes become opportunities to learn rather than reasons to surrender.

One of the greatest dangers during recovery is hopelessness. When someone believes life cannot improve, they begin questioning whether change is even worth the effort. These thoughts may become so powerful that a person imagines alternative outcomes or wonders if life will ever become meaningful again. During these moments it is important to remember that emotions are temporary, even when they feel permanent. Thoughts are not always facts. Recovery encourages individuals to reach out to trusted friends, counselors, sponsors, family members, or support groups instead of suffering in silence.

Hope grows through action. Every meeting attended, every honest conversation, every healthy meal, every night of good sleep, every therapy session, every apology, and every sober morning creates another brick in the foundation of recovery. These small victories may appear insignificant individually, but together they create lasting change. People rarely notice

recovery happening in one dramatic moment. Instead, they discover months later that their thinking has become healthier, their relationships stronger, and their future brighter.

Recovery also teaches forgiveness. Forgiveness does not excuse harmful behavior, nor does it erase consequences. Instead, forgiveness frees us from carrying unnecessary emotional weight. Learning to forgive ourselves may be one of the hardest challenges of all. Many people hold themselves to impossible standards while refusing to recognize the tremendous courage it takes simply to continue trying. Every day of sobriety demonstrates strength that deserves acknowledgment.

Resilience is not measured by how many times life knocks us down. It is measured by how many times we choose to stand again. Joe Walsh's story reminds us that tragedy, addiction, and emotional pain do not have to determine the rest of our lives. There remains room for growth, purpose, healing, and joy. One day at a time, one healthy decision at a time, people can build lives they once believed were impossible.

Moral Reflection One

Life will never be free from hardship, but hardship does not have to steal our future. Every person has the ability to begin again regardless of how difficult yesterday may have been. Courage is often found in ordinary choices made consistently over time.

Moral Reflection Two

The past should be remembered for its lessons rather than lived in through regret. Mistakes become valuable when they teach wisdom, humility, and

compassion. Recovery begins when we stop asking, "Why did this happen?" and begin asking, "What can I learn from this?"

Moral Reflection Three

Every human life has value. No matter how broken someone may feel, hope can return through connection, honesty, perseverance, and love. One day at a time is more than a recovery slogan—it is a reminder that every new day offers another opportunity to heal, to grow, and to choose life.

Group Topic: One Day at a Time – Resilience After Tragedy
Joe Walsh's life reminds us that addiction, grief, and painful memories do not have to define our future. Recovery is not about pretending the past never happened. It is about waking up each day and making one healthy decision at a time. Even after loss, mistakes, and moments of wondering "what if," there is still hope for a meaningful life.
Many people in recovery experience thoughts of regret or imagine how life could have been different. Those thoughts are common, but they do not have to control the present. Resilience means continuing forward despite pain. Every day we choose sobriety, kindness, and healing, we build a stronger future than yesterday.
Discussion Questions
What does "one day at a time" mean to you?
How has resilience helped you through difficult times?
How do you cope with regrets about the past?
What gives you hope when life feels overwhelming?
What is one positive choice you can make today that supports your recovery?
Closing Thought: "Your past may explain your story, but it does not have to determine your ending. One day at a time, healing is possible, and life is worth living."

Educations ✓

Written by Marcel Ray Duriez

226 followers · 534 following

Follow

Author, musician, and artist